

AN
EPIPHANY GIFT

January 6, 1994
The Traditional Day of the Magi

FABLES

By

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PEACOCK'S DESTINY

Peacock bragged that he was the only animal who did not have to work for his food. Cat had to catch mice; hen had to lay eggs; cow had to give milk; pony had to give the children rides; he only had to look magnificent and be admired.

One fall day a visitor admired peacock more than any other had. Paying the farmer a good sum of money, the visitor said: "I will make a profit from his feathers, my family will have roast peacock, and you will save a lot of wasted feed this winter."

THE DONKEY
AND THE STORY TELLER

On hearing a fable, a donkey pointed out how the fable was fanciful. The story teller replied: "If you are too much of an ass to see a fact, you are too much of an ass to see its illustration."

THE DOGS
AND THE BUTCHER

A pack of hungry dogs told a butcher that he had better feed them. The butcher took a broom stick and beat them. They left, but the next day they returned more hungry than before.

So the butcher threw one bone in their midst. The meanest dog drove the others away and ate the bone. The butcher kept him as a guard and thought the dog's food was a good investment.

THE COMPLAINT

OF THE RAMS

The rams complained bitterly: "First the farmer takes our wool and our vanity to make himself clothes. Then he takes our horns and our dignity to make himself decorations and musical instruments. Now he takes our organs and our ramhood - for what reason?"

The farmer thought: "What fine meat I will have. And to think they do not mind at all, but bleat pleasantly!"

THE FLYING SQUIRREL

WHO SOARED

A flying squirrel bragged to his friends how he could soar higher than the eagle. They dared him to prove it. So he climbed the highest mountain in that area and jumped off its steepest cliff.

As he glided down he called for his friends to witness his flight. His figure and voice were so tiny that his friends never noticed. But an eagle flying over the mountain on a hunt did notice.

THE COYOTE'S
PEACE PROPOSAL

A rancher wanted to keep peace with his sheep, so he set a coyote to graze among them and be his go-between. After a while the coyote suggested that the rams would best promote peace by giving up their right to horns.

THE WISE
AND FOOLISH FAWNS

A doe was teaching her two fawns the dangers of life. "Man is the greatest danger, and there is a man now," she said, pointing out a man with an injured foot walking along the road.

When by themselves, the two fawns saw a hunter. The wise fawn ran, but the foolish fawn, not seeing a limp, thought the hunter was not a man and stayed to be shot.

THE CASE OF
GAZELLE Vs. YOUNG LION

A young lion caught a gazelle, who argued against his right to do so. The young lion suggested that they should let the King decide between them.

So at the palace the gazelle argued her case long and eloquently. But the young lion said simply: "Well, Dad, I just brought home supper like you told me to."

WHEN THE EAGLE BECAME KING

Part One: The Selection.

The animals gathered to choose a king to rule over them. "Let us choose the field mouse," said some, "For he would never become a tyrant."

No," said the eagle, "A king must have a castle which is a fort, while the mouse lives in a hole in the ground."

Let us choose the turtle," said others, "He will not anger easily."

No," said the eagle, "A king must have speed to cover the whole country and prowess with which to fight the enemies, while the turtle is slow and clumsy."

Then let us choose the bat," said still others, "He will watch at

night and leave us unmolested during the day."

No," said the eagle, "A king must have sharp eyes to watch over all the land, and the bat is blind."

Well," said the donkey, "Let us choose the eagle, as his nest is a fort high on the cliff, he soars over all the land with ease, and his talons and beak are powerful weapons, while his eyes pierce through every cranny. What greater king can we choose?"

Finally the wise owl spoke. "The test of a great ruler is virtue, without which great talent is great tyranny."

But the animals were overawed by the eagle's majesty and crowned him king. And whereas the eagle showed much modesty and surprise at the choice, he thought, "I must watch the field mouse, the turtle and the bat lest they plot for my throne, and I must guard against the owl lest he encourage rebellion."

Thus it is that they who feather their own nest rest warily.

Part Two: The Reign.

One day the jackal and the fox lay in wait for prey on opposite sides of a path, not knowing of each other's presence. Along came a rabbit unaware of the peril. At the same time the jackal and the fox pounced on the rabbit and killed him.

They began to fight as to who should claim the prize. "One moment," said the jackal to the fox. "Let us take the case to our king, the eagle, so that he may decide whose the carcass should be."

So they laid the dead rabbit in some bushes and started to climb the cliff where the eagle had his nest. When they arrived at the nest, the eagle was away hunting for food, so they sat off at a distance, waiting and keeping watch.

Look at those greedy youngsters gaping for food," said the fox. "Are they to inherit the throne some day?" "Look at that filthy nest," said the jackal. "Is one who keeps his own home disorderly

able to preserve public order?"

Then the eagle landed at the edge of the nest, and in his talons was the very rabbit over which the jackal and the fox had argued. "What do you two citizens desire," asked the eagle.

Nothing," replied the fox. "We came to behold the glory of our king and pay our respects." "And may we now be excused by your majesty," asked the jackal.

Well pleased with this flattery, the eagle graciously dismissed them. As they descended the cliff, the fox observed, "Can he watch over the public good who provides his own good at the expense of others?"

The fox and the jackal told all the animals of this experience, and soon they were all resolved to dethrone the eagle and crown another.

So it is that they, who do not merit the respect and honor their authority demands, must beware lest familiarity reveal them contemptible.

THE PEACE CONFERENCE

All the living beings of the African plain gathered in order to agree on ways to reduce conflict and bring peace. Grazers, declaring all animals have equal right to life and security, moved that predation be outlawed.

At that the lions spoke up: "We accept the proposal only if the same equal right be extended to plants as well." With one voice the grasses seconded the proposal of the lions.

Grazers replied by running for their lives.

AFTERWORD

I hope you have enjoyed these little stories. They were written after reading folk fables of many lands, mostly in imitation of Aesop's Fables. They were fun to write, a challenge to compose typographically, and enjoyable to review.

I wanted to share that delight with you. And maybe you will try your hand at inventing similar stories to express your insights and sense of delight with the universe, sharing them at some future date. May you and yours be abundantly blessed with that Childlikeness which Christ taught is the doorway to Heaven.

To close this little gift of stories, may I ask you to join in a little giving to disabled and hospitalized veterans. Bob Backman of Greenfield, MA collects cancelled stamps for VA hospital patients who collect and trade them. Tear off a generous margin of paper and send the stamps to Bob at The Handwriting Analysis Research Library, 91 Washington St., Greenfield, MA 01301. Thank you.